

# USDA at Work for Agriculture in Iraq

September 2010

*The Iraqi agriculture sector suffers from outdated technology, inadequate farm credit, and a general state of disrepair in the irrigation and greater agricultural infrastructure. In addition, Iraqi government policies distort markets and undermine productivity. The effects of war, sanctions, inadequate fertilizer availability, inferior seed varieties, and mounting soil salinity have also made success in production agriculture more challenging. In this context, USDA plays an important role in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives in Iraq.*

**Role:** USDA bases its current role in Iraq on the 2008 U.S.-Iraq [Strategic Framework Agreement](#) (SFA) reached in December 2008. In the SFA, USDA is committed to helping Iraqi farmers “generate higher incomes” through programs in “agribusiness, agricultural extension, and policy engagement.”

USDA has placed U.S. agricultural advisors on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) throughout most of the country to provide U.S. agricultural experience and know-how to Iraqi producers and agricultural organizations to support Iraq’s agricultural revitalization. PRTs, acting as task-organized, multidisciplinary interagency teams partnered with provincial and local governments and paired with and supported by military units, are responsible for carrying out program and policy guidance at the provincial and municipal level. Their central mission is to assist in building government capacity, promote economic development at the sub-national level, and advance the goals of the U.S. Joint Campaign Plan to bring about a more stable and prosperous Iraq.

Typically, the PRT agricultural advisor is one of a few civilians on a PRT; the others are U.S. Department of State representatives

and U.S. Agency for International Development field program officers. The majority of U.S. personnel on any PRT are U.S. military personnel.

USDA experts at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad work with the Iraqi government. USDA is also the lead agency for U.S. government agricultural policy guidance to the Government of Iraq. In addition, USDA promotes commercial agricultural trade in U.S. farm products and reports on crop conditions.

**Presence:** Currently, 38 USDA staff in Iraq work on PRTs and at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

**Technical Assistance:** USDA is implementing a number of technical assistance activities to help revitalize Iraq’s agricultural sector. USDA’s technical assistance priorities in Iraq can be broadly classified as: 1) training and education of public and private sector representatives; 2) better managing water and soil resources; 3) improving animal and plant health; and 4) strengthening extension services.

USDA agricultural advisors working in the field on PRTs focus on strengthening local agricultural infrastructure, both physical and institutional. Projects directly assisting

farmers have been developed with local officials to improve irrigation technology, manage soil, range, and animal health, produce vegetables, process food, and build farmer organizations. In this role, USDA has recruited soil experts from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, statisticians from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, animal disease experts from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and experts from other USDA agencies.

USDA's Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization (IAER) project is a collaborative effort among U.S. land-grant universities, Iraqi universities, and the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture to improve the delivery of agricultural extension services in Iraq by providing extension and technical training that will expand skills and expertise. In 2009, 62 Iraqi government and university officials received advanced train-the-trainer agricultural extension education at five U.S. land-grant universities on subjects such as water resource management, soil analysis, and livestock management. As these Iraqis returned home, they began training their colleagues.

In 2010, 14 Ministry of Planning and Agriculture employees received advanced statistical training at USDA in Washington, DC, organized through USDA's Cochran Fellowship Program office. Seven Iraqi Ministry of Trade officials just completed travel to the United States to learn how USDA administers domestic food assistance programs as Iraq works to reform its public food distribution system. Through the Cochran Program, about 50 Iraqis have received training on a range of topics since 2005. Additional training programs are being formulated for implementation in 2010. The Cochran Program provides short-term agricultural training in the United States for mid- and senior-level public or private professionals.

Through USDA's Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and

Technology Fellows Program, five Iraqis attended U.S. universities in November 2009 to study irrigation management and seed multiplication. The Borlaug Fellows Program provides developing country agricultural researchers, policymakers, scientists, and university faculty members the opportunity to conduct cutting-edge research with a U.S. mentor at a U.S. land-grant university, 1890's college, government agency, international research center, non-profit institution, or private company.

USDA is also the implementing agency for a U.S. Department of Defense-funded program to provide 37 Iraqis with the opportunity to obtain masters degrees at U.S. universities. All of these Iraqi participants are currently studying English at Texas A&M University before beginning their masters' programs in earnest.

**Policy Advice:** Four USDA agricultural advisors at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad are implementing projects and advising different units within the Ministry of Agriculture. These advisors have developed effective working relationships with officials in this Ministry, as well as with academics and private sector representatives, through their work on agricultural strategy, animal health, food safety, soil and water conservation, and agricultural extension and education.

**Commodity Expertise:** USDA regularly publishes forecasts of Iraqi agricultural production, supply, and demand. Remote sensing data on weather and crop conditions are also made publically available. These forecasts provide much needed information to policymakers and markets about conditions and likely food import needs in Iraq. Go to the Iraq country page at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/country/Iraq/Iraq.asp> for links to the latest reports.

**Promoting U.S. Exports:** U.S. agricultural exports to Iraq during 2009 were \$155 million. Poultry meat was the largest product traded, but Iraq also buys significant quantities of U.S. rice (\$73 million in the

first six months of 2010) and wheat (\$64 million in the first six months of 2010).

USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) promotes U.S. exports to Iraq by encouraging policy reform, inviting participation in trade shows, and helping to develop private trade associations.

In June 2010, FAS organized an inaugural agribusiness trade mission to Baghdad, Iraq. Representatives of 17 U.S. companies met with more than 100 Iraqi entrepreneurs and buyers to increase U.S. agricultural exports, promote joint ventures, and boost investment in Iraq's developing agricultural sector. The U.S. companies met face-to-face in dozens of one-on-one meetings with Iraqi producers, processors, buyers, traders, and

investors who had come from all over Iraq to Baghdad to make business deals, form partnerships, and develop relationships. Several business deals were either finalized or were in the process of being negotiated when the mission concluded.

U.S. Wheat Associates, the American Soybean Association, and the U.S. Grains Council also conduct trade capacity building and market development activities to educate Iraqi decision makers using USDA's Foreign Market Development and Market Access Programs.

**General information about FAS programs, resources, and services is available on the Internet at the FAS home page: <http://www.fas.usda.gov>.**

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